



FIA Matters!

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Submit stories by e-mail to FIA-Newsletter@michigan.gov

My Florida trip

Genesee County FIA employee trekked to Florida as part of Michigan assistance team to help out with hurricane relief in the Sunshine State

From Jeffery Lemieux, Family Independence Specialist
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I volunteered to go to Florida earlier this year with the Michigan Emergency Management Agency Compact Team and work with Federal Emergency Management Agency or FEMA. I was part of a team that assisted Floridians with relief after hurricanes. I departed for this duty on Sept. 8.

The compact is an agreement between 48 states where they lend assistance to each another after a natural disaster or terrorist attack. Michigan joined the compact in 2001. FEMA is part of the U. S. Department of Homeland Security created to prepare and manage response and recovery efforts of a national incident.

Working with the people that I went with was an absolutely fascinating aspect of the trip. We were all from very different backgrounds and we all had very different skills. Three were from the Michigan State Police, one from Michigan Department of Transportation, another from Michigan Department of Community Health.



SECC visitor

Penguins visited this fall to support the State Employees Combined Campaign. Here Egan Cypher of Grand Traverse FIA, dressed up as the penguin in support of her local campaign, serves ice cream sandwiches to residents in the Traverse City State Office Building to remind them that "It's Cool to Give." The 2004 State Employees Combined Campaign dates were Sept. 20-Oct. 22. For more information go to www.misecc.org

Today's big story



One of many gas stations rendered inoperable by the hurricanes. When driving out there you had to have a full tank of gas because the gas stations were either destroyed or they didn't have electricity for the pumps to operate.

We flew out of Flint and went to FEMA headquarters in Orlando. Then, instead of going to Volusia County on the east coast of Florida, we were off to Punta Gorda in the southern part of the state on the Gulf of Mexico side. We stayed in Ft. Myers, about 25 miles south of Punta Gorda. When in Punta Gorda we all had duties which utilized our different skills. Two of us attended a meeting of the local nonprofit agencies where we explained to them about FEMA. The other team members were getting started doing what they specialize in.

Then, due to Hurricane Ivan, the team was evacuated out of the area and we went back to Orlando. There we got our new orders – we were given the responsibility of going into areas of Orlando that were devastated by flooding. We went door to door handing out pamphlets and answering questions about FEMA and other agencies where people could get help. When in the field we also distributed water to anyone that needed it. Since Hurricane Ivan devastated Pensacola, they needed us up there in the Florida Panhandle. We checked in at the office in Tallahassee. It looked like something you would see in the movies – a huge room with lighted maps and video screens on the walls.

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My Florida trip

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We stayed the night in Tallahassee, and the next morning we drove out to Pensacola. The I-10 bridge that goes out to the peninsula was destroyed by the storm. It took a 40-foot surge of water to take out that bridge that was designed to withstand a hurricane. Because of that, we took a long ride around Pensacola Bay. When driving out there you had to have a full tank of gas because the gas stations were either destroyed or they didn't have electricity for the pumps to operate.

When we arrived in Pensacola, there was so much going on – helicopters, jeeps, military trucks and ambulances coming and going all day and all night. They were still in the first responder stage, such as recovering the deceased and rescuing people that were injured and/or trapped by the storm. Our skills weren't needed there so our team leader decided it was time for us to go home. We slept in our cars that night because there was no place else to go and it was too late in the evening to attempt to drive off the peninsula. In the morning we drove back to Orlando and got on the airplane for home. I arrived back in Flint Sept. 19.



Amidst the chaos and destruction of hurricanes, businesses were trying to recover some of their losses.

Next issue: Unbelievable destruction around Florida

Project MEN making a difference in Genesee Family Resource Center

By Michelle Chockley, Family Independence Manager
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Washington Elementary School is beginning its second year as a Family Resource Center. One of the initiatives for this year is **Project MEN – Male Effort Needed**. This initiative recognizes the overall need for more adult male volunteers in a primarily female dominated school setting.



Rev. Tony Campbell (center) addressing families at Washington Elementary School. Washington is one of three FIA Family Resource Center sites in Flint.

A key figure in promoting this initiative is Rev. Tony Campbell, a former Marine officer who volunteers in Flint and other areas to get more parents involved in their children's schools. Rev. Campbell used to be the backup speaker for retired Gen. Colin Powell and has been a guest at the White House. His passion is to promote and recognize adults who work with kids.

Project MEN activities included an open house at Washington Elementary School on Sept. 29 where Rev. Campbell, the keynote speaker, addressed a gym full of parents and children stressing the importance and positive effects of male role models in our children's lives.

Rev. Campbell's team includes Micki Hope, principal of Washington School, parents and staff at the school as well as community partners. This group is very busy planning future events including a lunch bunch, recognizing parents of the month and recruiting parents as volunteers for the Helping One Student To Succeed program that recruits mentors to help kids with reading.

KCISF and FIA partner to bring new resource to Spring Valley

From Excelsior, Sept. 2004, published by Kalamazoo Public Schools

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Exciting, exhilarating, busy are adjectives chosen by **Ceata Key** and **Jason Page** to describe the new Family Resource Center in Kalamazoo. Key and Page are workers from the Family Independence Agency recently relocated to an office at Spring Valley Elementary School in Kalamazoo. Part of a state pilot project, Key and Page's positions make up one of the Family Resource Centers in Michigan.

The center is part of a broad local effort by the Kalamazoo Communities In Schools Foundation (KCISF) to develop and sustain the connection of community resources with schools to achieve excellence in education for Kalamazoo area children. According to Kalamazoo FIA director and KCISF board member **Sherry Thomas-Cloud**, "This center allows our agency and staff to get back to delivering prevention services, which we are very pleased about."

Family Resource Centers are designed to operate at the local level in priority schools. Each community – including FIA, the school district, individual school building personnel, and other community partners such as KCISF – is able to tailor the center to meet specific needs of the families and children attending the identified school.

"Since we already had full-service schools under the communities in schools umbrella, we were ahead of the game," said Thomas Cloud. "It's great to finally have the resources to implement this."

The KCISF site coordinator at Spring Valley, Mary Hoyle, said: "The quality of their relationships is already defining the quality of the service delivery. They've already become a part of the Spring Valley family. Families and kids are stopping by to say hi.... the kids love them."

Family Resource Centers greatly add to the menu of options to help address the physical, social and emotional needs that often get in the way of students doing well academically. One early example of what the FRC has been able to do is to purchase a washer and dryer to be located at the school to make sure that students' hygiene and appearance do not interfere with their overall school success.

Also, workers will be helping families with housing issues to stabilize their living situations, which can mean the difference between a child attending school regularly and being chronically absent. Assisting families with qualifying for other FIA benefits such as children's health insurance will likewise be readily available.

Page's and Key's location within the school setting, as with other community resources operating within a school, increases their accessibility to students and their families and to school staff. Key and Page are impressed with the positive atmosphere within the school and find the adults all have a genuine focus on children that is refreshing.

KCISF director Pam Kingery and Thomas-Cloud are hopeful that the outcomes demonstrated at Spring Valley will be so compelling that that there will be expansion opportunities in future years.

"In the long run, we know that when students' emotional, social and physical needs can be consistently met, we can expect to see improvements in attendance, behavior and academic achievement," said Kingery. "The Family Resource Center is a major contribution toward that effort and KCISF is very appreciative of all the work Kalamazoo FIA has done to make this a reality."

"We were planning to make Spring Valley a full service school in 2004-05 (school year) anyway; this is an exceptional way to start!"



FIA Family Resource Centers

are placed in priority schools to coordinate services according to the goals developed and shared by the family, community, school and all other agencies involved. One or more Family Independence Agency specialists work in each center to identify barriers and assist families in connecting with local resources to improve their student's school performance. The centers serve as a "one stop shop" for family services located within or near a neighborhood school.

Cass County staff partner with church to help local migrant families



From Sheila B. Beaty
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The Granger Missionary Church provided back-to-school backpacks for 100 Cass County migrant children including those pictured. [Susie Perez](#) and [Jesucita Lopez](#), Cass County FIA Migrant Program specialists, assisted members of the Granger Missionary Church with distribution. A special thank you goes to The Granger Missionary Church and the Cass County Migrant Program workers.



Date: Oct. 13

To: FIA Matters!

Subj: [Natashia Hodges](#)

My letter is regarding my FIA worker and her supervisor (from) the (Oakland County) FIA office in Madison Heights. I have been receiving services about six years for physical and mental disabilities. My worker, Ms. Natashia Hodges, has been a dream worker, I think, going well above the call of duty. I am on spenddown Medicaid and I usually meet that within the first three days of each month. Certain times I've requested her to put my spenddown on before the 10-day time they are allowed because of medical emergencies. On one occasion when out of state I became acutely ill and needed emergency hospitalization. My caseworker from Easter Seals Adult South Oakland Community Mental Health contacted Ms. Hodges and, in her absence, her supervisor Mrs. [Dianne Dubin](#) to help me out. She, both Ms. Hodges and Mrs. Dubin are so courteous and my Easter Seals worker said they are great to work with. One time she was away on maternity leave and I got a worker from hell. When she came back, her supervisor asked her if she wanted to take my case back and she did. I try to only call if necessary and follow the directions on her voice mail. Maybe you see now why I am so grateful to Ms. Hodges and Mrs. Dubin.

[Bridget M. McAinsh](#)

Madison Heights

■ *Natashia Hodges is an eligibility specialist with Oakland County FIA Madison Heights District and Dianne Dubin is a family independence manager in the same office.*

Date: Sept. 22

To: FIA Matters!

Subj: [Patricia Schultz](#)

In Midland County we have a new heroine, family independence specialist [Patricia Schulz](#). About mid-afternoon she saw the worker from the next cubicle standing by her door and turning blue. [Gary Bremer](#) had coughed while eating a small piece of fudge and sucked the fudge into his airway where it had become lodged. Luckily he was able to point to his throat which was all she needed to know. This mild-mannered and soft-spoken lady did the Heimlich maneuver, even against his panicked protests, and popped it out. Lucky for Gary, Pat was there; most of us had forgotten what to do and at a time of panic. Lesson learned – we will refresh our life saving skills on an office wide basis in the near future. We, and Gary, are very happy we have another chance to get ready before the next time.

[Paul Henry Petiprin](#), Family Independence Manager

Midland County FIA, Midland

■ *Gary Bremer is a family independence specialist with Midland County FIA.*

Your letters,
intercepted
and otherwise

FIA Matters! is a product of Michigan's Family Independence Agency
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Larry VanDeSande, editor Submit stories by e-mail to: FIA-Newsletter@michigan.gov